

"I Used To Be Very Smart:" Children Talk About Immigration

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Immigration to the United States has played a major role in the growth of the nation, while locally immigration continues to shape New York City and Brooklyn, in particular. Despite the large numbers of immigrant children in New York City, we know relatively little about their experiences as immigrants: what upheaval, separation and dislocation are like for them, and how these experiences become integrated into their developing cultural and personal identities. The following paper describes a research project which seeks to redress this gap in the literature by eliciting children's perspectives on their own experiences of immigration, and analyzing their stories for their educational implications.

This research project, funded by the Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York, was conducted in three public schools in Brooklyn, New York. The drawings and accompanying narratives of sixty immigrant children, ages seven through eleven, were gathered and analyzed. The children, recently arrived (within the past three years) from China, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Hong Kong, Mexico, Pakistan and Russia were asked to draw and talk about three phases of their experience of immigration: life in the country of origin prior to immigration, the actual passage to the United States, and their everyday life in New York.

The narratives were elicited, recorded and transcribed by bilingual and bicultural research assistants in either the child's primary language or in English. Research assistants met weekly for forty minutes with the children in small groups of four or five children, for fourteen to sixteen weeks. The groups were balanced for gender and grouped according to age. Questioning was open ended and children were encouraged to follow their own initiatives in drawing and speaking about their experiences. Thematic analysis of the children's narratives was conducted by the author, the principal investigator of this project.

In the paper which follows, children's narrative as a genre which offers a closer look at childhood experience is explored. The children's own stories of their immigration experiences are examined for the meanings which these transitions hold for them, and for the implications for educational practice they suggest. Landscapes of home and stories about school figure prominently in the children's narratives, and are juxtaposed against current life experiences. This paper will explore the role of the imagination in enabling children to make connections between their lives before and after immigration and suggest implications for educational practice.

Children, immigration and narrative

Children are usually not privy to the decision making process which culminates in the family's emigration; this dramatic event often comes as an unwelcome surprise to which the children are expected to adapt within short order. What we do know about children's immigration experiences is often retrospective in nature, gleaned from adult reflections upon childhood experiences. In recent years oral history projects have sought to preserve the memories of immigrants, relying upon the stories of adults. Recent publications feature the experiences of adult immigrants, often involving recollections of childhood (Barnett, 1993; Henken, 1991; Newell, 1990; Smith, 1988; Stave, Sutherland & Salerno, 1994). Few oral history projects though focus on the stories that children themselves tell.

Children are typically addressed as audience, rather than storytellers (Haut, 1992; Lindow, 1993; Tucker, 1992.)

An underlying assumption in the positioning of child as audience rather than narrator is that the ability to reflect upon one's experience is uniquely adult. Yet the ability of children to consider their experiences and draw personal meaning from them is often overlooked when narrative expression is oral. Katherine Nelson (1989) in her book, *Narratives From the Crib*, addressed this oversight in her description of her daughter, Emily's soliloquies. These narratives marked the changes and discontinuities in Emily's life (the birth of a brother, nursery school and carpooling) as she tries to make sense of her experiences. Emily's narrative is shaped by the act of telling her story, while Nelson's creation of text, through recording and transcribing, illuminates the meanings that these autobiographical events hold for Emily.

Careful listening and rendering of oral tales into text preserve experience for the historical record while providing a framework for understanding the personal experience of the storyteller. Ricoeur (1984) reminds us that the act of telling shapes one's story, thereby lending structure and form to pre-narrative lived experience. The narrative genre has added richly to our understanding of the impact of lived experience on how we come to view ourselves as unique and also, as connected to others. The study of narrative is closely linked with autobiographical studies, with autobiography viewed as the construction of one's life story (Bruner, 1990; Freeman, 1993; Nelson, 1994). Within this context, children's

construction of their own life stories may be viewed as a form of emergent autobiography.

Children's narratives, shaped by their lived experience, including their social and cultural environs, and by their developing ability to give language to experience provides another, closer perspective on development. Vygotsky (cited in Rieber & Carlton, 1987) traces the patterns of discourse which surround children and shape their capacity for interpersonal experience. These patterns of discourse are linguistically as well as socially and culturally coded, enabling children to make meaning of their experiences and providing them with the means with which to make familiar the novel or unknown.

Immigration interrupts these familiar patterns of discourse and ways of understanding the world. It introduces discontinuities into the lives of children; their development diverges from the linear path in which growth in childhood is often conceptualized. Development is reconsidered here, not as a trajectory but rather as a process shaped and altered by both the familiar and by the new social, linguistic and cultural experiences which immigration bring.

The on-going process of locating oneself between two cultures results not in the temporary inconvenience of resettlement, but rather in a pervasive feeling of lost ground, literally and metaphorically. These losses, which exist alongside growing attachment to the host country, are expressed as the lost landscape of home, lost developmental gains, especially freedom of movement, and finally, a haunting sense of lost social and educational ground.

Landscapes of home, landscapes of memory

The children's stories draw upon memories encoded in language, in the sights and smells of lost homes and gardens, the familiar sounds of home, in the sounds of words spoken and stray dogs barking in distant schoolyards. For many, airplanes continue to appear in their drawings as iconographic representations of the transition between cultures. Often, the drawings are split in two, with clouds and rain upon the New York City half, while the sun shines down upon the vanishing home.

Houses once lived in continue to live on in memory and imagination. These houses are almost always remembered as more glorious, more spacious, more inviting, bustling with family and the activities of everyday life than their contemporary counterparts. The very real changes in living situations engendered by the act of leaving the national and family home are juxtaposed against the reality of the children's current living conditions. For many, the move has been to more modest quarters, often involving what is experienced as a decline in the economic and social standing of the family.

Erum, age eleven, describes her house in Pakistan, and compares her current, modest apartment with her former living standard, which included "servants" (sic.), and where even the pictures that hung on the walls were grander:

This house is in Pakistan where I lived. It has eight rooms, three bathrooms, two living rooms, three kitchens and one storeroom. ...My grandma, mother, father, my one sister, my grandma and the people who worked in my house (lived in the house). We had three servants... One thing I like about Pakistan is that the houses are so beautiful. ...over here the houses are small. The pictures in houses in Pakistan are very big...

The children's representations of home point to the ways in which home is socially and culturally constructed. The experience of home changes in meaning with the transition to a different culture and to a different set of life circumstances. Hina, age eleven, describes the shock of living apart from her multigenerational extended family, whose encompassing presence once defined the meaning of home. Home in New York City is comprised of a fragment of what Hina grew up understanding home to be. She enumerates the family members who constituted her home in Pakistan, naming them and fixing them in her culturally defined notion of home:

My two grandmas, my grandpa, my mother's brother and wife and their three kids, my dad's brother and his wife and their seven kids, dad, mom, one sister, me, one brother, my dad's sister and husband and their one child. We had a very big house with more than sixteen rooms...there were six stories - it was like a building. Here, we have two bedrooms, one living room, one kitchen and bathroom. My dad, mom, sister and brother live with us. It's not fun that no other relatives live with us.

Her classmate, Samara, wraps recollections of her grandmother's house in Pakistan in memories of fragrance: "When it rains, it smells so good outside, when I was at my grandma's house in Pakistan..."

The landscape of home encompasses the shared, communal spaces in which one feels "at home." The physical landscape of home surrounds memories of home, and is captured in the children's embodied memories of the outdoors, especially in the memories of the youngest children. Camila, seven years old, recalls her house in Santo Domingo, locating it within a hub of friends and memories of play. Her memories are physicalized memories of playing in tall, scratchy grass, of mixing leaves and mud, and of stripping bark from trees.

It was a big house with a courtyard where you could play ball. I used to play ball with my cousin Damiana who is sixteen years old and likes to skate. In the games I was always last and there was a lot of tall grass that used to make me itch. ...I had a

lot of friends in Santo Domingo. I could go to their houses at night because they lived so close by - just a skip away. We played a lot with dolls and cars made of paper and wood houses. We made food with leaves, sand and water. We would mix it, but we did not eat it. We played with trunks of plants. We would peel the plant and then jump from it.

Dimitri, now seven, left Russia when he was three years old. Like Camila's, his memories of home are outdoor memories, a composite of his older brother's linguistically encoded memories and his own embodied memories of play in the yard adjoining his house.

When I was young and I was three years old I remember nothing, but my brother told me that we dug a big hole in our yard and I broke the shovel. And I remember the swing in our backyard and this swing didn't have a holder and when I swung in it, it flew!

Dimitri's memories of play, a melange of faintly remembered physical sensation and stories his brother has told, are socially and imaginatively constructed. Stories and artifacts, the raw materials of such memories of home provide connecting links to both people and place. These stories, reworked more fully in the imagination and augmented by the cultural artifacts of home, connect children to the lives they left behind, and sometimes to lives that they never even lived.

The adaptive function of memory and nostalgia in children's cultural transitions is often overlooked, or when noted, viewed as a hindrance to adaptation, a defensive maneuver which obstructs acclimation to the new setting. The children's stories, though, point to a different function for their storied recollections. Constructed in the company of family and given form and shape in the imagination, such memories create a strong link to the home left behind. These images of home and a life once lived continue to reside in the imagination, providing an emotional anchor and a frame of reference for children as they negotiate the in-between spaces between two cultures and two homes. Such socially and imaginatively constructed memories connect children to places they may dimly remember, or not at all, and provide, during moments of difficulty in the transition, a comforting touchstone from a shared past.

Hui, for example, left Hong Kong with her parents when she was a baby, but soon returned to live with her grandparents while her parents remained in New York to work. Until age five she shuttled between Hong Kong and New York, finally settling in Brooklyn with her parents when she was five. Two years later she reconstructs her memories of home from the stories her family tells and from old photos taken when she was a baby. Drawing a favorite scene of herself as a baby in a carriage gently pushed by a young woman with long, dark hair, Hui narrates:

I was born in Hong Kong. My mother left me in Hong Kong and she came to the U.S. I was five years old when I came to New York. I don't remember Hong Kong. I know I lived there with my mother, father and sisters. When I looked at the picture we took in Hong Kong I see that my mother took me out with the baby carriage, but I don't remember where we went. I don't remember the house we lived in. I'm going to draw my mother - she is pushing the baby carriage. These are the wheels. My mother has long hair.

Missing loved ones, as Hui suggests, does not always end with reunion. Longing for lost time and for the lost episodes of everyday life bring a poignancy to these recollections which are given expression in Hui's favorite drawing of herself as a baby out for a stroll with her mother. Here, we can track the powerful role of the imagination in creating links between these two worlds, first through repeated pictorial representations, and later through narrative expression. Hui locates herself within a world she dimly remembers, superimposing her current experience (her mother's long hair) on her lost past.

Arrival in New York requires such a juxtaposition of experience. Everyday life in New York often contrasts sharply with the cadences of life in the country of origin. While the move to the United States is generally rationalized to children as affording long term gains, it is the changes in their everyday lives that the children attend to most closely. In juxtaposing life as lived with the new routines of everyday life, the children reclaim ownership of the familiar, everyday life in their countries of origin, while acquiring the rhythms of life in very different surrounds.

The transition to the host country requires learning a new set of expectations for everyday life, some of which run counter to the gains already made in the country of origin. The competence with which the school aged children interviewed here had approached everyday life in their countries of origin is challenged upon arrival in New York. For children who had achieved freedom of movement, restricted movement and increased dependence upon adults are experienced as developmental losses. Children who were strong students in school, similarly, suddenly find themselves struggling as they learn a new language and encounter different expectations for what constitutes academic success.

Immigration and lost developmental ground

In coming to New York, many newcomers trade a rural for a heavily urban environment, moving from a landscape of low houses to highrise buildings. Paradoxically, the move to a more densely populated community is accompanied by an increased feeling of isolation and remove from the communal life which once constituted everyday life in the

children's countries of origin. The move to New York is typically accompanied by a loss of physical freedom for school aged children who had attained a level of autonomy in their home countries which they are promptly denied upon arrival in the United States.

Dimitri, seven years old, feels the constraints imposed on play as a result of his parents' long work hours and concerns for his safety. He observes that what was considered normative in Russia, i.e. playing out of doors without adult supervision is no longer a possibility for him.

If I lived in Russia I would go outside every day and play outside with my friends. In American my father works all day and my mother doesn't have time to go with me. In Russia she isn't afraid if I play outside alone.

Especially for those children who in emigrating have moved from a tropical to a temperate climate, life in New York is often experienced as shut in, with too much time spent alone, waiting indoors, looking out a window. Their parents' taxing work schedules and fear of crime complicate the children's experience of lost physical freedom. Yves, eleven years old and from Haiti, complains of restrictions on his ability to establish and maintain a wide circle of friendships: "But in Haiti you could go anywhere even your parents don't say nothing because you know the place a lot, because in New York you could get lost anywhere." Michelange, his classmate, observes: "After school, here you stay in a building like a cage, then you're looking out the window." Marie, eleven years old, reflects on the loss of freedom to move about on her own since leaving Haiti for New York:

I like New York, but it's just that I hate the seasons except for summer. I like Haiti because it's summer the whole day and it's fun. I get to go outside to play anytime I feel like it, and I can go places. I can go all by myself. When I'm in New York I stay in a building and I can't even go nowhere. I have to wait. Only if I'm going to the library or the store. And then after, I stay only if my mom or anybody else is going out and I ask then I can go. I can't go nowhere and it's too much killing in the street.

She compares the fear of crime in New York with the eruptions of violence in her native Haiti. In so doing Marie preserves the image of her native land as benign and safe, though political instability and violence led to her family's decision to emigrate. It is this place, as preserved in the imagination, against which her current life experience is juxtaposed.

It's not everyday (in Haiti) but everyday (in New York) you hear something in the news, somebody die, somebody did this, somebody did that, but in Haiti you don't see that all the time. When you see that it's when it takes a whole week and everything happens at the same time, it's not all the time.

The self that might have been had the continuity of everyday life not been interrupted by emigration includes also one's identity as a student. At its best, school provides a place in which children can develop a sense of themselves as competent learners, effective and productive in the world beyond the threshold of home. The experience of school in New York, though, is generally dramatically different from the children's experiences in their countries of origin. The language of instruction, except for those children in bilingual classes, is foreign, presenting an obstacle to learning that is absent when instruction is in the native language. The culture of the school, from the ways in which classrooms are arranged to expectations of student behavior and achievement vary, often giving rise to children's concerns that they have lost irretrievable academic ground in making this transition.

Angie, eleven years old and recently arrived in the United States confesses:

I'm a little worried about my English and I don't understand the teacher in school - that I can't catch up with my classmates. I miss my friends, teachers and everything in Hong Kong.

The passage of time does not always erase the sense of lost ground and possibilities that were common to many of the immigrant children interviewed in this study. Louis, from China, has attended school in Brooklyn since first grade, and is currently in the fourth grade. He recalls his confusion in the English speaking class in which he was first placed, and suggests a lingering sense of lost ground that the intervening years have failed to attenuate: "I used to be very smart (in China) but now I am not smart."

Dimitri, a second grader whose formal schooling has been entirely in the United States, imagines himself a stronger student if only he had remained in his native Russia. He comments: "I want to go to Russian schools. In Russia I would be the best student in my class because I wouldn't go to ESL classes and I wouldn't have to learn English."

Sometimes dramatically different expectations for student achievement in New York public schools can mystify new arrivals. Glory, a fifth grader from Haiti, compares her schooling in New York with her earlier experiences in Haiti. She complains about the heavy homework load in her current school, which leaves little time for play with friends, and is especially troubled by the different expectations for student achievement she encounters in New York. In Haiti, Glory understood how to be a good student, and could confidently stand before her teacher, reciting the assigned curricular material. Her current teacher's assignments, though, designed to develop critical thinking skills are experienced instead as arbitrary and frustrating.

When I came from school (in Haiti) I used to be with my friends all the time after doing my homework. They used to give us a lot of homework, but here it's worse. Even if they don't give a lot of homework, but the homeworks are...they're not that hard, but they're too corny. You just study and you write the stuff, it takes so long. In Haiti, you just study them to remember and then recite them. Even if you study five times and when you remember them (in New York) when you get to the teacher, the teacher wants you to know things that they didn't even say you should know!

At its most concrete, learning the culture of a school involves not only deciphering adult expectations of children, but also learning how to manage lunch in a crowded cafeteria where adult tempers are easily frayed and cultural differences in the rituals of mealtime commonly overlooked. Louis, recalls such an early lunchroom experience:

One time me and my friends took extra pizza at lunch time because we were hungry and didn't understand how much lunch we were allowed to take. The teacher got angry and told us to stand outside the lunchroom. The other boys I was with also didn't understand English - they were Chinese.

Despite the strangeness of the new school culture, and the challenges which adjustment to a new setting entail, school quickly becomes central to the lives of many immigrant children. Restricted in their out-of-school lives, school provides opportunity to re-establish some of the social networks with peers which emigration disrupted, and provides them with a critical perspective with which to consider their experiences of schooling in two cultures.

Children's perspectives on schooling in two cultures

Feelings of loss regarding family members left behind in the native country reside alongside newfound friendships, most often formed in school. Many of the children cited other, helpful children, who offered a helping hand. Sometimes, children helped translate for the newcomer; at other times, a welcoming smile and an offer of friendship provided a sense of communal support.

Raul, age seven, comments: "I found Michael in the same classroom and he helped me translating to English. He became my friend and he is bilingual. I don't remember how was my first day, but my friend helped me." Alvaro, age eleven, also recalls his arrival from Chile, "When I came first here, I felt strange, but I think that without some of the kids who are bilingual, I couldn't make it."

Children who share a native language help each other extend their social worlds to include children who speak only English, or who speak another language. Louis, reflecting on

his early days in first grade three years ago, cites the role of other Chinese children who helped him become friends with classmates:

I would ask my classmates, "Can you be my friend?" If they said O.K., I would ask a Chinese child to help me to understand them. I also asked a Russian child to be my friend. I had an American friend who lived next door to me.

The children's animated responses to schooling in both their countries of origin and in New York City's public schools underline the function of school as a site of acculturation in which children learn those aspects of citizenship which will enable their participation in a particular culture. Their narratives reveal appreciation for the freedom and possibilities represented by New York City schools as symbolized by the absence of school uniforms (though this is rapidly changing), the varied student population of their classrooms, the display of children's work on classroom walls, the lunch provided (even if dismissed as unappealing), and most important of all, the injunction against hitting children.

Fazia, age eleven, recalls school in Pakistan, where the sanctions were stiff for speaking out of turn in class, or for not answering correctly, but where slipping out of class was often overlooked in the crowded classroom:

It was bad because we got hit a lot. We couldn't understand that good because of the noise, then we would be talking then the teacher would ask us and when we gave the wrong answer we would get hit. The most fun part was whenever we wanted to get out of class we could pretend to go to the bathroom.

Fazia's family is planning to return to Pakistan, and despite her stated preference for life in her native country, she adds: "This time, if they hit me in Pakistan, in school, I'm telling my mom. I'm not going to school in Pakistan, they hit you too much."

Pedro, seven years old, also recalls children slipping out of school in Mexico when he was in first grade, and the punishment which ensued:

Sometimes the children would escape from class just like in America and they didn't return until the next day. When they returned, they were suspended. There was a hole in the back of the school where they used to escape from. There they used to break the ruler on you and you had to pay for the ruler. ...One time a teacher hit me with a belt because they told him that I was doing other things and it was not me, but the boy named Armando. After school I gave him one [punch] and he gave me two and left me there.

While universally expressing relief at being free of the fear of being hit by their teachers, some children balanced these views with observations about screaming in their

current school experiences. Screaming as an unsettling, distressing and not uncommon school experience for new arrivals to the United States was spontaneously presented by a number of children in different schools as they reflected upon corporal punishment in their schooling prior to emigration. Their responses to screaming included a sense of being disliked by their teachers, even if they were not themselves the subjects of their teachers' anger and frustration, and an occasional glimpse of empathy for a struggling teacher.

Lisette, eleven years old, for example, balances her views on corporal punishment in her native Dominican Republic with her impressions of teachers in New York City. She raises questions about talking being replaced with screaming at children in New York City classrooms, and what this suggests about teacher practice, especially around issues of teacher authority and efficacy.

I was scared, I saw the teacher shouting and I felt that I wanted to cry. I didn't know what to say. I just was scared. ... [Drawing] This is my school in the Dominican Republic. The school was not so big as schools in this country. I used to buy some candies outside of the school. There was a kind woman selling them, she was always smiling at me and telling me how was my day. The teachers were always talking to us, they were not shouting to the students as here. A few days ago, I saw tears in my teacher's eyes because a girl was repeating each word that she was speaking; my teacher was really angry. Over there, if a student behaves badly then the teacher gives him a 'chocolate' (the teacher will hit the girl with a piece of wood on her hand). That was not every day, it was only when necessary, but the teacher didn't need to shout out the whole day as here.

Ambivalence about the new country centers about Lisette's troubling school experience, and is caught up with a new demand for loyalty to the United States. In describing her picture, she adds: "This was my flag and this was me. ... I am not there and I have to pledge allegiance to the American's flag every day. Sometimes Santo Domingo seems too far..."

Discussion

School represents a primary site in which all children, regardless of place of birth, negotiate transitions between cultures: between the intimate culture of home and what Grumet (1988) calls the "Common Culture" of school. The cultural transition which children make in leaving home and coming to school involves not only physically moving between these discrete worlds, but includes also negotiating the interstices created in the meeting of the home culture and the common culture of school. For children newly arrived in the United States, this space between cultures is filled with the paradoxes and the possibilities which attend this convergence of cultures.

Differences in teacher expectations, curriculum, and even the arrangement of classrooms can be perplexing to children newly arrived to the United States. In helping children negotiate cultural transitions, educators help newcomers understand the differences they encounter in this convergence of cultures, and enable them to recover the developmental gains lost in migration. Restricted options for socialization, and reduced opportunities for play resound throughout the children's narratives, contributing to a sense of lost developmental ground.

Educators can translate for families and schools what these lost developmental gains mean for immigrant children, and plan for ways in which social and academic gains can be recouped. Opportunities to interact with classmates in collaborative learning groups provide children with in-class opportunities to become better acquainted with their classmates and interrupt the loneliness which often attends immigration. Afterschool programs in schools and community settings provide children with safe alternatives to spending afternoons alone at home, looking out the window, while providing support for homework obligations which can often feel onerous to recently arrived children. Other students, especially other bicultural children, are repeatedly cited as crucial to newcomers' early adjustment to school in the new setting.

School often presents a challenge to the academic gains which immigrant children have made in their countries of origin. In attending school in the United States, newly arrived children adapt to what is often experienced as a dramatically different school culture, with new rules, expectations and even lunchroom customs. Students who were successful with curricula in their countries of origin which emphasized memorization and recitation may be unfamiliar with the demands of curricula which emphasize critical thinking.

Curricular expectations cannot be assumed to be understood, but must rather be explicitly interpreted for children by educators. Additionally, children who are recent arrivals to the United States need to learn a new set of study skills; the methods which served them well in their earlier educational experience may no longer be sufficient for continued success in their current school. Creating opportunities for interpretation and direct instruction, and for children's expression of their own position between two cultures can help protect children from a sense of lost developmental ground. An understanding and responsive school climate can provide children with the confidence that they can develop a new cultural literacy even as they develop proficiency in a new language.

The children's reactions to curricular demands in their New York City schools underline the cultural grounding of all curriculum, and suggest that English language proficiency

alone will not necessarily result in academic achievement. English language fluency does not signal the endpoint of adaptation to the new country. Rather, acculturation to different beliefs, values and customs occurs alongside enculturation within the culture of origin, thus ensuring that immigrant children maintain those qualities valued by members of their cultural groups (Berry, 1993; Kaminsky, 1993).

Acculturation to the new setting is accompanied by on-going enculturation to the culture of origin. The process of enculturation involves metaphorically locating the self within the culture of origin, a self whose everyday life is continuous, and uninterrupted by emigration. Concerns about lost developmental ground which accompany children's acculturation efforts co-exist alongside such imagined lives in the culture of origin. The imagination plays a powerful role in keeping alive the image of a self enveloped by the culture of origin, providing a stable image of who one is, at a time when change and uncertainty predominate.

Fantasy, the imagination, and the means with which to give expression to the experience of residing between cultures can play important parts in helping children construct meaning of their experiences. In referring to the power of imagination Dewey (1934; 1980) points to the possibilities that art embodies though these are not actualized. The imagined self, that which preceded immigration and might have developed had immigration not occurred, is such an unrealized construction. These possible selves are embodied in narrative, providing a counterpoint to lived experience within the new country and a vision of what might be.

Cultural transition brings possibilities of growth and change; the imagined self growing between two cultures draws upon, yet is different from that which preceded immigration. For example, Nadia, a ten year old girl from the former Soviet Union, dismayed that women's teams in this country are so few, imagines herself one day as the founder of an all women's basketball team in the U.S. The social construction of curriculum and assumptions about academic success are underscored by the children's attempts to make meaning out of their experiences of schooling in two cultures. The children's comments about their experiences of corporal punishment in their countries of origin and their remarks about screaming in their current classrooms underlines the continued need for educators to work towards eliminating fear and promoting respectful understanding in classrooms.

Rather than approaching the experience of immigration in childhood as a condition to be rapidly overcome, educators need to recognize the contributions of immigrant children to our understanding of immigration, culture and education. Children's narratives of their experiences in their countries of origin and in their new homes, as both oral and written text, can become an integral part of language arts

and social studies curricula for all children. Finally, immigrant children's observations of life, and especially education in two cultures raise questions about the assumptions we make about children and schooling. Listening to what children have to say about their own experiences of cultural transition, and creating the opportunities for such conversations to unfold, can provide not only curricular material, but also new perspectives on the taken-for-granted of everyday life in schools.

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